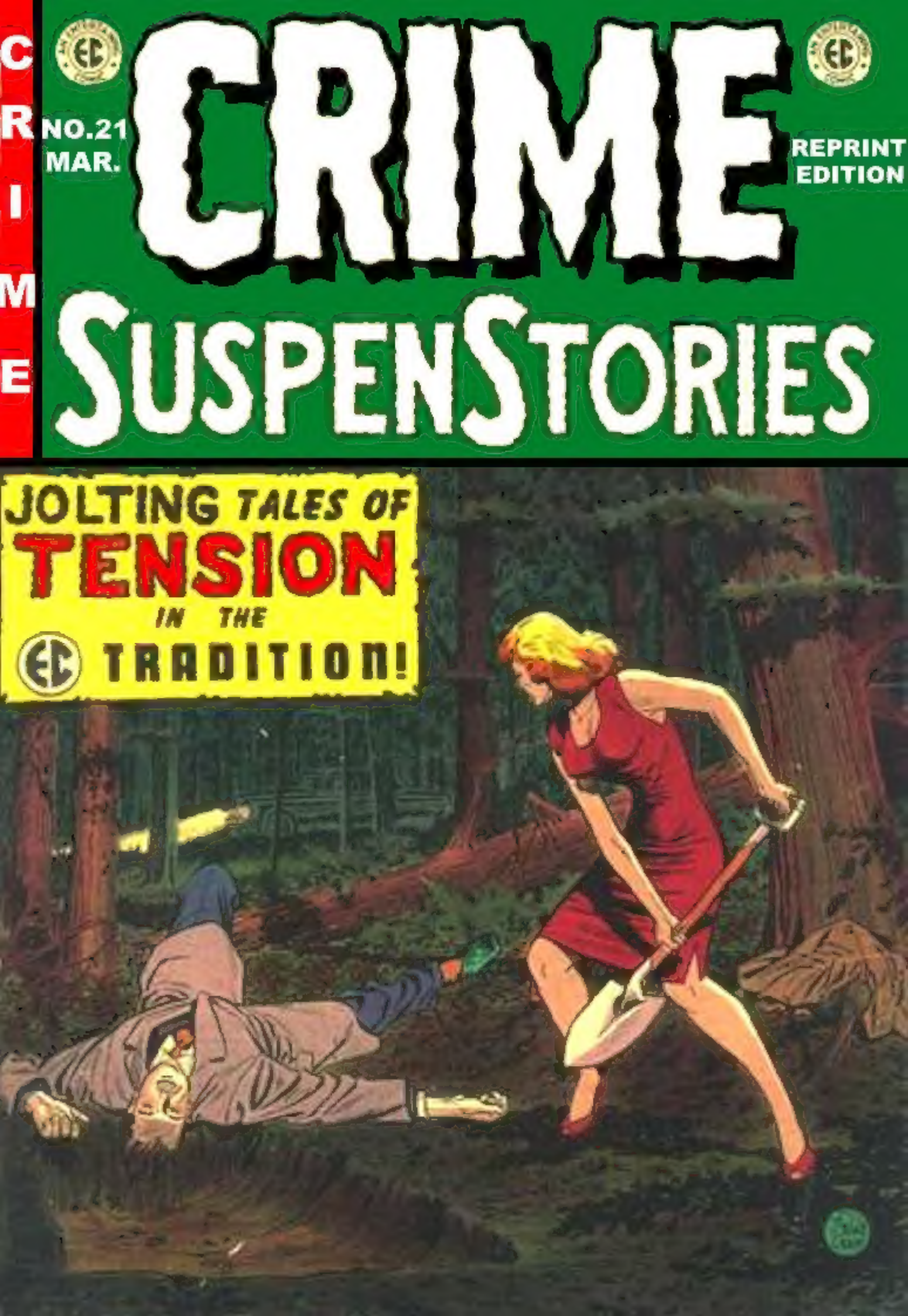

CRIME
NO.21
MAR.
CRIME
SUSPENSTORIES
REPRINT
EDITION
JOLTING TALES OF
TENSION
IN THE
EC
TRADITION!

MOTHER'S DAY

DONNA KINGSLEY'S OLD AND WRINKLED FACE WAS A GRIM EXPRESSIONLESS MASK. SHE SAT STIFFLY ON THE HUGE BED, STARING STRAIGHT AHEAD OF HER WITH GREY COLD EYES THAT SHOWED NO SIGN OF EMOTION. THE ACRID ODOR OF GUN SMOKE WAFTED UPWARD TO HER AND SHE INHALED ITS BITTER SMELL. BUT SHE DID NOT MOVE. SHE DID NOT LOOK DOWN AT THE CRUMPLED BODY LYING LIFELESS BESIDE HER BED WITH THE CRIMSON FLUID SPURTING FROM THE BULLET HOLE IN ITS HEAD AND POOLING OUT OVER THE BEDROOM RUG. SHE JUST SAT THERE... RIGIDLY...COLDLY...THINKING...

DONNA KINGSLEY THOUGHT OF THE YEARS GONE BY... THE YEARS OF TORTURE AND LONELINESS AND ANTICIPATION... THE YEARS OF WAITING THAT WERE OVER NOW BECAUSE FRED, HER OLDEST SON, LAY DEAD BESIDE HER BED. AND SHE THOUGHT ABOUT HAROLD, HER YOUNGEST SON... HAROLD, WHOM SHE'D ALWAYS PREFERRED...HAROLD, WHO HAD BEEN HER FAVORITE, EVEN WHEN THEY'D BEEN CHILDREN...

HE *ALWAYS* GETS THE BEST PART OF THE STEAK, MA! WHY CAN'T *I* GET THE *TENDERLOIN* ONCE IN A WHILE?
HUSH, FRED. HAROLD IS *YOUNGER* THAN YOU. HIS TEETH AREN'T AS *STRONG* AS YOURS. HE *NEEDS* THE TENDER PART...

DONNA'D KNOWN RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING... THAT HAROLD WAS AN EXCEPTIONAL CHILD. HE WAS MORE SENSITIVE THAN FRED...MORE PRECOCIOUS. SO SHE'D BABIED HIM... SPOILED HIM...

PERHAPS IT WAS BECAUSE FRED LOOKED SO MUCH LIKE HIS FATHER. PERHAPS THAT WAS THE SOMETHING THAT HAD TURNED DONNA COLD TOWARD FRED. MR. KINGSLEY HAD ANNOUNCED TO DONNA ONE NIGHT DURING HER PREGNANCY WITH HAROLD...

HE'D LEFT HER WITH A YOUNG SON AND ANOTHER CHILD ON THE WAY. AND DONNA'D LOOKED UPON HER YOUNG SON'S FACE AND SEEN HIS FATHER'S EYES, HIS FATHER'S MOUTH, AND SHE'D GROWN COLD. SO WHEN HAROLD WAS BORN THE MIRROR-IMAGE OF HERSELF, SHE'D NATURALLY FAVORED HIM...

DONNA'D CUDDLED HAROLD AND COOED OVER HIM. AND FRED HAD WATCHED THIS AND FELT HER COLDNESS...

AS HAROLD HAD GROWN, DONNA'S CUDDLING AND COOING HAD CHANGED TO OVERPROTECTION AND FAVORITISM. HAROLD COULD DO NO WRONG. FRED WAS USUALLY TO BLAME...

BUT, DESPITE EVERYTHING, FRED HAD NEVER STOPPED LOVING HIS MOTHER. DONNA'D KNOWN THIS, AND YET COULDN'T BRING HERSELF TO RETURN HIS DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION...

HAROLD, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAD NEVER GONE HUNGRY FOR DONNA'S MOTHER-LOVE. SHE'D GIVEN HIM ALL OF IT... EVEN FRED'S SHARE. AND FRED HAD WATCHED AND SAID NOTHING...

SINCE DONNA'D BEEN DESERTED, SHE'D HAD TO WORK TO SUPPORT HERSELF AND HER TWO SONS. MONEY WAS TIGHT. THEY HAD BARELY ENOUGH. YET HAROLD WAS ALWAYS WELL DRESSED. FRED, THOUGH...

MOM, CAN'T I HAVE A NEW SUIT? HAROLD GOT A NEW SUIT. THIS ONE'S ALL WORN OUT.
IT WILL HAVE TO DO FOR A WHILE, FRED. THE HOUSE NEEDS REPAIRS AND...

ONE NIGHT, DONNA'D ANNOUNCED...
THE FAMILY JUST CAN'T MANAGE ON WHAT I MAKE AT MY JOB, BOYS. FRED, YOU'LL HAVE TO QUIT SCHOOL AND GO TO WORK...
BUT, MA! I WANTED TO GRADUATE SO I COULD GO TO LAW SCHOOL...
I'M SORRY, FRED. YOU'LL HAVE TO GIVE UP YOUR PLANS. PERHAPS HAROLD WILL BE ABLE TO FINISH AND GO TO LAW SCHOOL...
YES, MA'AM!
DO YOU THINK SO, MA? COULD I? GOLLY! ME! A LAWYER!
SO FRED HAD BEEN FORCED TO LEAVE HIGH SCHOOL AND GET A JOB AS A SHIPPING CLERK TO HELP SUPPORT THE FAMILY...
LET'S GO, FRED! LET'S GET THAT TRUCK UNLOADED.
YES, SIR!
...WHILE HAROLD HAD BEEN ABLE TO CONTINUE ON WITH HIS SCHOOLING...
THE AREA OF A CIRCLE IS DEFINED BY THIS FORMULA...
AND DONNA'D WATCHED FRED GROW MORE AND MORE COLD, AND SHE'D SENSED HIS GROWING JEALOUSY AND HATRED OF HAROLD...
HOW WAS SCHOOL TODAY, DEAR?
OKAY.
DONNA REMEMBERED THE ARGUMENTS THE BOYS WOULD HAVE... HEATED DISAGREEMENTS THAT NEARLY ENDED UP IN VIOLENCE...
SO HELP ME, HAL, I'LL BEAT THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS OUT OF YOU IF...
YOU'LL DO NO SUCH THING, FRED. YOU'LL LEAVE HAROLD ALONE. COME, DEAR...
SHE'D INTERRUPTED MANY OF THESE FLARE-UPS IN TIME TO PROTECT HAROLD FROM FRED'S RESENTMENT. AND FINALLY, SHE'D DELIVERED HER ULTIMATUM...
EITHER YOU STOP PICKING ON HAROLD, OR YOU LEAVE THIS HOUSE, FRED.
Y-YES, MA!
3

DONNA THOUGHT OF THE TIMES THAT HAROLD WOULD SMILE SWEETLY AT HER AND ASK...
CAN I HAVE SOME MONEY, MA? I GOT A HEAVY DATE TONIGHT.
OF COURSE, DEAR! GET ME MY BAG.
AND SHE REMEMBERED FRED'S GRIM FACE AS HE WATCHED HAROLD KISS HER AND LEAVE...
DON'T WAIT UP FOR ME, MOM.
COME HOME EARLY, HAROLD, HONEY!
SHE REMEMBERED FRED'S ANGRY RESENTMENT... HIS PACING THE HOUSE... HIS FINALLY ANNOUNCING...
I'M GOING OUT TOO, MA!
I GAVE HAROLD ALL THE MONEY WE CAN SPARE, FRED.
AND THEN, DONNA REMEMBERED THAT HORRIBLE NIGHT WHEN THE BOYS'D COME BACK HOME DIRTY AND TORN AND GASPING FOR BREATH...
YOU'VE BEEN FIGHTING!
YEAH, MA! WE'VE BEEN FIGHTING!
SHUT UP, HAROLD!
SHE REMEMBERED HOW SHE'D SCREAMED AT FRED...
GET OUT! GET OUT OF MY HOUSE! I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN! NEVER!
OKAY, MOM...
AND SHE REMEMBERED THE DOORBELL SHATTERING THE SILENCE AS FRED WAS PACKING... AND ANSWERING IT... OPENING THE DOOR... AND SEEING THE POLICEMAN...
WHY, OFFICER! IS THERE ANYTHING WRONG?
THERE WAS A ROBBERY DOWNTOWN, MA'AM. WE'RE LOOKING FOR A FELLER NAMED 'KINGSLEY..'
SHE REMEMBERED THE LOOK THAT PASSED BETWEEN HER TWO BOYS, AND FRED STEPPING FORWARD...
IT'S... IT'S ME YOU'RE LOOKING FOR, OFFICER. I DID IT!
BETTER COME ALONG WITH ME, SON.

DONNA REMEMBERED THE TRIAL SO CLEARLY.. SHORT AND SWEET... FRED'S CONFESSION, AND THEN...
I SENTENCE YOU TO FIVE YEARS OF HARD LABOR IN THE STATE PENITENTIARY...
SHE REMEMBERED HOW THEY'D LED FRED AWAY... HOW HE'D LOOKED AT HER PLEADINGLY...
FORGIVE ME, MA...
THIEF! CROOK!
SHE REMEMBERED HOW FRED HAD TAKEN HER HAND AND TRIED TO KISS IT, AND HOW SHE'D DRAWN IT AWAY...
MA... SOB...
YOU'RE NOT MY SON ANYMORE. YOU'RE JUST A BUM... A WORTHLESS BUM... LIKE YOUR FATHER...
HOW SHE'D SPIT AND TURNED...
COME, HAROLD!
SURE, MOM! ER... G'BYE, FRED!
TAKE CARE OF HER, HAROLD...
DONNA REMEMBERED HOW FRED HAD WRITTEN TO HER AFTER BEING SENT TO JAIL... EVERY WEEK... AND HOW SHE'D BURNED THE LETTERS WITHOUT EVEN OPENING THEM...
AND THEN, DONNA REMEMBERED FINDING THE GUN...
HAROLD! IS...IS THIS YOURS?
WHY, YOU NOSEY @#!!*!...! GIVE ME THAT!
HAROLD! WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH A GUN?
NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS! WHAT I DO IS MY OWN AFFAIR!
5

WHAT YOU DO IS MY AFFAIR. YOU'RE MY SON. DO YOU THINK I WANT YOU TO END UP LIKE FRED?
FRED! HE WAS A SUCKER. HE TOOK THE RAP!
I'LL PLAY IT SMART!
NOBODY PLAYS IT SMART WITH A GUN, HAROLD! GIVE IT TO ME!
LE'GO, MA! I NEED IT!
GIVE ME THAT GUN, HAROLD!
LET GO OF ME, MA! I'M WARNIN' YOU!
ONE ROTTEN THIEF IN THE FAMILY IS ENOUGH! IF YOU WON'T GIVE ME THAT GUN, I'LL CALL THE POLICE AND MAKE THEM TAKE IT AWAY FROM YOU.
STAY AWAY FROM THAT PHONE, MA! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING!
I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING! I'M STOPPING MY BOY FROM MAKING A BIG MISTAKE!
PUT DOWN THAT PHONE, MA! PUT IT DOWN! MA, SO HELP ME, I'LL...
HELLO, OPERATOR! GIVE ME THE PO-...
NNNNNNNNGGG...
I WARNED YOU, MA!
6

DONNA REMEMBERED HOW, TWO YEARS LATER, HAROLD KINGSLEY HAD DIED... CUT DOWN BY POLICE BULLETS... THE END OF A BRIEF CAREER OF CRIME THAT HAD BEGUN WITH ROBBERY AND ENDED WITH MURDER...

AND SHE REMEMBERED HOW SHE'D GROWN BITTER THROUGH THE YEARS... HOW SHE'D HEARD THAT FRED WAS BEING RELEASED FROM PRISON... AND HOW HE'D ARRIVED UNEXPECTEDLY, JUST A FEW MINUTES BEFORE...

HOW HE'D STOOD BESIDE HER BED AND WHISPERED...

HE'S DEAD NOW, MOM! I CAN TELL YOU... TELL YOU EVERYTHING. HE WAS NO GOOD! HE USED TO CUT CLASSES. I FOUND HIM DOWNTOWN ONCE, WHEN I WAS WORKING. I WARNED HIM...

BUT HE DIDN'T LISTEN, MA. THAT'S WHAT WE USED TO ARGUE ABOUT. I DIDN'T WANT HIM TO HURT YOU. BUT HE DIDN'T CARE. HE STARTED RUNNIN' AROUND WITH THE WRONG CROWD... STARTED GETTIN' INTO TROUBLE. I USED TO FOLLOW HIM. I WANTED TO PROTECT HIM...

I SAW HIM ROB THAT STORE, MOM. I BEAT THE DAYLIGHTS OUT OF HIM. AND WHEN THE COPS CAME, I TOOK THE BLAME! I KNEW HOW MUCH YOU LOVED HIM...

DONNA REMEMBERED HOW SHE'D SAT THERE, STIFFLY, LIKE STONE, HER FACE COLD, GRIM, UNEMOTIONAL...

MA! FOR GOD'S SAKE! HE WAS NO GOOD! YOU LOVED HIM, YES! BUT HE WAS NO GOOD! BELIEVE ME!

SHE'D SAT THERE, RIGID, UNMOVING, STARING STRAIGHT AHEAD AS HE'D FALLEN ON HIS KNEES BESIDE HER BED...

HE NEVER LOVED YOU AS I LOVED YOU, MA! I DIDN'T GO TO JAIL FOR HIM! I WENT FOR YOU. I KNEW HOW YOU FELT ABOUT HIM. I WANTED TO SPARE YOU... SOB... SOB...

SHE'D NOT BATTED AN EYELASH AS HE'D PLEADED...

MA! IF YOU DON'T FORGIVE ME... I'LL... I'LL...

...NOT STIRRED AS HE'D DRAWN THE GUN...

I'LL KILL MYSELF, MA! IF THE FIVE YEARS I'VE GIVEN UP HASN'T WON YOUR LOVE, I'LL KILL MYSELF... SO HELP ME...

...NOT EVEN LIFTED A HAND AS HE'D FIRED...

MA! SAY SOMETHIN'! MA! MA... A... A...

BANG

YES, EVEN THOUGH HER HEART WAS CRYING, DONNA KINGSLEY SAT STIFFLY, UNEMOTIONALLY, ON THE HUGE BED, STARING STRAIGHT AHEAD OF HER...

...NOT MOVING... NOT EVEN LOOKING AT THE CRUMPLED BODY OF HER SON, FRED, LYING ON THE BLOOD-STAINED FLOOR...

SHE'D SAT LIKE THAT FOR SO LONG. EVER SINCE HAROLD HAD HIT HER ACROSS THE BACK OF HER NECK WITH HIS GUN AND COMPLETELY PARALYZED HER, DONNA'D SAT THAT WAY. FRED HAD COME UNEXPECTEDLY, WHILE THE NURSE WAS OUT. HE'D POURED OUT HIS HEART TO HER. AND DONNA'D BEEN UNABLE TO KISS HIM AND HOLD HIM AND STROKE HIS HAIR AND MAKE IT ALL UP TO HIM... NOT ONLY THOSE FIVE YEARS, BUT HIS WHOLE LIFE...

THE END

FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS, WEDDED BLISS HAD BEEN NOTHING MORE THAN A MYTH TO JIM DONALDSON...
...IF I WANNA GET DRUNK, I'LL GET DRUNK! NOW GET OUTTA HERE AN' LEMME ALONE!
ONE OF THESE DAYS, MYRTLE! S'HELP ME, ONE OF THESE DAYS...
POW! RIGHT IN THE KISSER!
AND IN ANOTHER PART OF THE CITY, GAIL WILLIAMS ALSO LED A VERY UNHAPPY MARRIED LIFE...
OW! STOP IT! STOP IT! YOU'RE HURTING ME!
I'LL BREAK YOUR NECK IF YOU DON'T SHUT UP! I'LL GET A JOB WHEN I'M GOOD AND READY!
AW, SHUT UP, WILL YA! SHUT UP!
SURE! I'LL SHUT UP! I'M SICK OF TALKING TO YOU! YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A DRUNKEN SLOB AND I'M SICK OF YOU! THIS IS IT, MYRT! WE'RE THROUGH!
I CAN'T STAND THIS ANYMORE! ALL YOU DO IS BEAT ME! YOU NEVER GET A JOB! I'VE HAD TO SUPPORT YOU FOR TWO YEARS, AND I CAN'T TAKE ANYMORE!
G'WAN! GET OUT OF HERE! I'M SICK OF LISTENING TO YOU BELLYACHE!
I'LL SHOW YOU, MYRT! I'M GONNA FIX YOU GOOD! YOU BEEN ASKING FOR TROUBLE EVER SINCE WE MARRIED... AND NOW YOU'RE GOING TO GET IT!
AW, SHUT UP! SHUT UP! SHUT UP! SHUT UP!
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BEAT ME ANYMORE! I'M GETTING OUT! I'M... I'M LEAVING!
HAH! GO AHEAD! LEAVE! YOU'LL BE BACK! YOU ALWAYS COME BACK!

IT WAS FATE THAT BROUGHT THEM TOGETHER. NO ONE COULD DENY THAT. BUT LITTLE DID THEY KNOW THAT ALL THEIR HATES AND PASSIONS WOULD STAY THEM IN GOALS SO DIFFICULT THAT THEY SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN PLAYED BY TWO PEOPLE WHO WERE ONLY THE...

UNDERSTUDIES!

I KNOW, GAIL. I'VE BEEN PRETTY UNHAPPY TOO. I.. I... MARRIED SOMEONE ELSE RIGHT AFTER WE HAD THAT QUARREL.
SO DID I! I DON'T KNOW WHY. I NEVER LOVED ANYONE BUT YOU, JIM!
2

THEY HUDDLED TOGETHER IN A QUIET CORNER OF THE BAR, TELLING ONE ANOTHER OF THEIR UNHAPPINESS, AND GRATEFUL THAT THEY HAD BEEN BROUGHT TOGETHER AGAIN.
I'LL NEVER LET YOU WALK OUT OF MY LIFE AGAIN, GAIL...
BUT WHAT CAN WE DO, JIM? NEITHER OF US CAN GET A DIVORCE...
THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY WE CAN BE TOGETHER! YOU KNOW THAT! ONLY ONE WAY... BUT IT'LL TAKE NERVE!
I KNOW! AND I'M NOT AFRAID! BUT, BUT HOW?
I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT IT FOR MONTHS! IT'S SIMPLE! WE CAN BOTH WORK IT THE SAME WAY! I'LL TELL MY WIFE I'M TAKING HER ON VACATION. THEN I'LL KILL HER AND BURY HER BODY IN QUICKLIME. YOU DO THE SAME WITH YOUR HUSBAND. THEN YOU AND I WILL GO AWAY TOGETHER!
THE QUICKLIME WILL COMPLETELY DESTROY THEIR BODIES SO THEY CAN'T BE IDENTIFIED, EVEN IF THEY ARE FOUND! WE JUST HAVE TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT NONE OF THEIR FRIENDS MISSES THEM AND GETS SUSPICIOUS! AND WE CAN TAKE CARE OF THAT BY SENDING THEM PHOTOGRAPHS!
PHOTOGRAPHS?
SURE! DON'T YOU SEE? IF MY WIFE'S FRIENDS GET SOME PHOTOGRAPHS OF ME STANDING WITH A WOMAN, THEY'LL NATURALLY THINK IT'S MY WIFE, ESPECIALLY IF THE PICTURE ISN'T TOO GOOD! OF COURSE, YOU'LL HAVE TO DYE YOUR HAIR AND HAVE IT CUT SHORTER, THINGS LIKE THAT! GET IT?
I SEE! OH, JIM, DO YOU THINK IT'LL WORK?
OF COURSE IT'LL WORK! WE'LL MAKE IT WORK! HONEY, I'D DO ANYTHING TO BE WITH YOU!
I SHOULD BE FRIGHTENED, BUT I'M NOT! I JUST WANT TO BE WITH YOU ALWAYS!
WE WILL BE TOGETHER SOON, DARLING! AND THEN I'LL NEVER LET YOU GO!
OH, JIM, I LOVE YOU SO!
3

A WEEK LATER, JIM DONALDSON LED HIS WIFE MYRTLE TO THEIR CAR. THE "VACATION" HAD BEGUN...
GEEZ! CAREFUL WITH THAT BAG! YOU'LL BUST MY BOTTLES OF SCOTCH!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. BELIEVE ME, YOU WON'T BE NEEDING MUCH!
AND AT THE SAME TIME, GAIL AND HER HUSBAND PREPARED TO LEAVE ON THEIR VACATION...
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? I DON'T WANT TO BE LATE!
LATE? LATE FOR WHAT? WE GOT PLENTY OF TIME! ALL I DID WAS GO SAY GOOD-BYE TO ALFIE DOWN THE CORNER!
TWO HOURS LATER ON A LONELY COUNTRY ROAD..
WHAT'S THE MATTER? WHY'D YOU STOP THE... HEY! WHAT'RE YOU DOING WITH THAT KNIFE?
IT'S THE END OF THE LINE, MYRT! THE END OF THE LINE! GET OUT!
ELSEWHERE, GAIL WAS RIGHT ON SCHEDULE...
SAY! WHAT'S THE IDEA? WHERE'D YOU GET THAT GUN?!
SHUT UP! I'M GIVING THE ORDERS NOW! STOP THE CAR AND GET OUT!
JIM! JIM! FOR GOD'S SAKE, JIM! DON'T!
PLEASE! GAIL! I WON'T HIT YOU NO MORE! I'LL GET A JOB! PLEASE! DON'T BE CRAZY!
AAAGH!
BLAM
BLAM

IT WAS EVENING WHEN JIM DONALDSON FINISHED DIGGING HIS WIFE'S GRAVE...
THERE! I'LL GET THE QUICKLIME FROM THE CAR TRUNK... THEN DUMP HER IN! WONDER HOW GAIL'S MAKING OUT...
GAIL? SHE WAS DOING VERY WELL FOR HERSELF.
(GASP!) ALMOST FINISHED! DIDN'T KNOW DIGGING A GRAVE (GASP) WAS SUCH HARD WORK! OH, JIM...
IT WAS MIDNIGHT WHEN THEY MET AT MUNICIPAL AIRPORT...
GAIL! THANK HEAVEN YOU'RE HERE! THE PLANE'S READY TO LEAVE! DID YOU...
YES! YES, I DID EVERYTHING JUST LIKE YOU SAID!
WHEN WE GET TO PARIS, YOU'LL HAVE TO CHANGE YOUR HAIR, SO WE CAN TAKE THE PHOTOS!
YOU'LL HAVE TO MAKE A FEW CHANGES SO YOU CAN POSE AS MY HUSBAND, YOU KNOW!
A WEEK LATER IN PARIS, ALL ADJUSTMENTS HAD BEEN MADE AND...
ARE YOU SURE EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT, JIM?
POSITIVE! WE'LL BE SO FAR AWAY FROM THE CAMERA, NO ONE WILL BE ABLE TO SEE OUR FACES!
THE FIRST SET OF PICTURES THAT JIM'S FRIENDS RECEIVED WERE A PHOTOGRAPHER'S NIGHTMARE, BUT TO JIM AND GAIL THEY WERE PERFECT, FOR THEIR FACES WERE COMPLETELY UNIDENTIFYABLE...
Such a ... go to visit the ... Riviera next ... swell time— Jim.
AND GAIL'S FRIENDS BACK HOME RECEIVED PICTURES OF THE SAME QUALITY. THERE WAS NO DANGER WHATSOEVER OF ANYONE BECOMING SUSPICIOUS...
Notice my hands? I changed it All the ... this way over here ... eye it black Like it ... long while, but ... my hair. Gail
5

JIM AND GAIL TRAVELED IN EUROPE...
JIM... DON'T YOU THINK PEOPLE BACK HOME WILL GET SUSPICIOUS IF THEY NEVER SEE US CLOSE-UP IN A PICTURE?
HMM... MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT! YOU'D BETTER PUT ON A LITTLE WEIGHT, SO YOU WILL LOOK MORE LIKE MY WIFE!
AND MY HUSBAND HAD A PAUNCH! SO YOU BETTER GET A LITTLE FLABBY! AND ME DIDN'T HAVE AS MUCH HAIR!
OKAY, GAIL! I DON'T WANT TO TAKE ANY CHANCE OF SOMEONE GETTING SUSPICIOUS!
WE WON'T HAVE TO DO THIS ALL THE TIME, WILL WE?
OH, NO! LATER ON, WE'LL WRITE THAT WE'RE GOING TO STAY HERE! THEN GRADUALLY, WE'LL STOP CORRESPONDING!
THE NEXT SET OF PHOTOS THAT JIM SENT TO HIS OLD NEIGHBORS SHOWED A WOMAN WHO RESEMBLED HIS WIFE VERY CLOSELY. NO ONE EVER SUSPECTED THAT IT WASN'T MYRTLE...
I'm getting much heavier. You in the picture. We're both have wonderful time. Neither are coming home. But
AND GAIL'S FRIENDS WERE SO PLEASED TO SEE THAT HER HUSBAND WAS LOOKING SO WELL...
I MUST BE GETTING JUMPY! DO YOU THINK WE'LL GET AWAY WITH IT? POUR ME ANOTHER DRINK, HUH, JIM?
HERE! I JUST HOPE NO ONE GETS WISE! MAYBE...
MAYBE IF WE TAKE SOME PICTURES REAL CLOSE, THEY'D BE SURE IT WAS...
IT'S DANGEROUS, BUT YOU'RE RIGHT! OH, JIM...HOW MUCH LONGER MUST THIS GO ON?
LISTEN, I'M UNDER JUST AS MUCH STRAIN AS YOU ARE! NOW GET HOLD OF YOURSELF!
I...I'M SORRY, JIM. LET ME HAVE A DRINK, HUH?

MORE THAN A MONTH PASSED BEFORE JIM SENT THE NEXT BATCH OF PICTURES TO HIS FRIENDS, BUT BY *THEN*, HARDLY *ANYONE* REALIZED THAT THE WOMAN WITH HIM WAS NOT HIS WIFE, SO COMPLETE WAS THE CHANGE...

AND IN THE PICTURES THAT GAIL SENT, HER "HUSBAND" LOOKED MORE LIKE HIMSELF THAN EVER...

IN FACT, THE TRANSFORMATION WAS SO GREAT THAT AT TIMES JIM FOUND HIMSELF *GLARING* AT GAIL, AND MUMBLING THINGS THAT WERE VERY FAMILIAR...

TIME PASSED... AND GAIL REALIZED, THROUGH THE HAZE OF HER NOW FREQUENT DRUNKEN STUPORS, THAT JIM HAD BECOME A CARBON-COPY OF HER DEAD HUSBAND...

IF I WANNA GET DRUNK, I'LL GET DRUNK! *OW! STOP IT! STOP IT! YOU'RE HURTING ME!*
YOU MAKE ME SICK! I'LL *BREAK* YOUR *NECK* IF YOU DON'T SOBER UP! *DRUNKEN SLOB!*

IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE INEVITABLE WOULD HAPPEN! AS THE WEEKS AND MONTHS WENT BY, THEIR BITTER FEELINGS TOWARD ONE ANOTHER MOUNTED TO THE ULTIMATE FINISH...

ON SCHEDULE!

It had gone off like a perfectly-rehearsed play: the "Brain's" master-plan had been followed with a precision that would make the police numb with admiration. The way the "Brain" had mapped out the job, it was virtually impossible for the Law to ever break the case.

At 9:19, on the head, Sam and Benny had slipped through the front door of the Second National Bank . . . which had been left open as the "Brain" had promised. 7 minutes later, no more or less, Lew had roared up to the bank's front entrance, where he was joined by Sam and Benny, lugging a satchelful of dough, 45 seconds later . . . after the watchman had gone down the street for his nightly beer By 9:43 . . . exactly on schedule . . . the car whirled over the West Street Bridge, and headed into the suburbs. As the "Brain" had promised in his outline of the heist, not a single alarm had been sounded!

At precisely 10:12, following the master-plan, Lew turned off the main highway onto the dirt road just 6 miles north of Milltown, and switched off the car's headlights. With the dashboard lit by a match Sam held, Lew carefully steered the car 2½ miles down the twisting road. Near the huge oak tree from which the bark had been torn off, Lew switched off the ignition and Sam blew out his match. Acting like a cohesive team, the three men jumped from the car: Benny removed cartons of food, the sleeping bags and the water jug from the trunk case, while Sam and Lew unreeled the long detonating wire which was attached to the motor. Puffing furiously, Benny made three trips to the rendezvous point, carrying the provisions they would need during the 4 days they were to hide out here in the hills. Sam and Lew, meanwhile, had set up their apparatus as quickly as possible.

At last, at precisely 10:30, the Fire Ranger's siren went off with a blast, assuring the whole valley that the surrounding countryside was free of blaze. Lew pushed down hard on the two-handed detonator: some distance away, on the darkened road, there was a roar and a momentary flash of light.

"There goes the car," Benny whispered. "That dynamite did the trick. Let's grab the stuff and head for the hiding place the 'Brain' set up for us!"

"The sleeping bags . . . the food . . . the compass," mumbled Sam. "I got all *my* stuff. How about *you* guys?"

"The water jug . . . the cooking utensils . . . the guns," answered Lew. "I got *mine*."

"The car's blown to smithereens . . . I got the signal flare . . . the change of clothing . . . the . . .

"T-The *satchel!*" Benny shrieked. "We followed the 'Brain's' instructions to the letter, but no one took the satchel loaded with the loot! W-We left it in the car...IT'S BEEN BLASTED TO BITS BY THAT DYNAMITE!!!"

For a moment there was stunned silence. Lew, at last, cleared his throat and spoke with a strange, anguished huskiness. "It . . . it's all the 'Brain's' fault," he croaked, as if in pain. "He didn't say which one of us was to carry it!"

IN THE GROOVE

MY NAME IS *GARRY GREEN*. I'M A *DISC JOCKEY!* SEVEN YEARS AGO, I WAS AN UNKNOWN. . AN OBSCURE ANNOUNCER ON A SMALL TOWN STATION. I MARRIED RITA BACK THEN BACK WHEN I DIDN'T HAVE A DIME TO MY NAME. IT WAS A MISTAKE A *TRAGIC* MISTAKE MARRYING RITA. THERE WAS NOTHING SPECIAL ABOUT HER NOTHING WONDERFUL. SHE WAS JUST AN ORDINARY GIRL, BUT I WAS LONELY AND SHE FILLED MY LONELY HOURS. SO I MARRIED HER BUT NOW, RITA IS DEAD. SHE LIES UPON THE LUSH RUG OF OUR PENTHOUSE APARTMENT WITH HER SKULL CRUSHED AND THE BLOOD OOZING FROM THE LACERATIONS CRISS-CROSSING HER SURPRISED FACE. BEHIND ME, THE RADIO BLASTS LOUDLY... LOUD ENOUGH TO HAVE EFFECTIVELY DROWNED OUT RITA'S SCREAMING A MOMENT AGO, AS I COLDLY BEAT HER TO DEATH...

WHY DO I FORGET, WHEN YOUR BIRTHDAY ROLLS AROUND?
WHY DON'T I PICK UP WHAT YOU DROP UPON THE GROUND?
GOOD-BYE, RITA! GOOD RIDDANCE!

I STARE DOWN AT RITA'S STILL FORM. THE LYRICS OF THE RECORD FILL THE ROOM I CHECK MY WATCH. . .

WHY AM I ALWAYS IN HOT STEW?
MY ALIBI IS. . I LOVE YOU!
PERFECT! IN THIRTY MORE SECONDS, THE RECORD WILL BE OVER. THAT GIVES ME PLENTY OF TIME TO GET BACK TO THE STUDIO.

I STAND FOR A FEW SECONDS, LISTENING TO THE BLASTING RADIO...LISTENING TO THE WORDS OF THE SONG. AND I SMILE. YES, THAT *WAS* A *SADISTIC TOUCH*. . CHOOSING *THAT* RECORD...

I THINK OF VALERIE, WAITING FAR ACROSS TOWN, BESIDE HER RADIO, LISTENING TO THE WORDS OF THE SONG...
WHY AM I ALWAYS IN HOT STEW? MY ALIBI IS...I LOVE YOU!
AND I THINK OF THAT DAY THREE MONTHS AGO WHEN I MET HER. VALERIE. BEAUTIFUL DESIRABLE VALERIE. IT WAS AT A COCKTAIL PARTY GIVEN BY ONE OF MY SPONSORS...
GARRY! THIS IS VALERIE SIMMS. VAL, MEET GARRY GREEN.
THE FAMOUS DISC JOCKEY! I'M DELIGHTED, MR. GREEN!
HOW DO YOU DO, MISS SIMMS?
RITA WASN'T ABLE TO ATTEND THAT COCKTAIL PARTY, SO I'D GONE ALONE. IT WAS FATE, I GUESS. VAL AND I MET...WE DANCED...WE FELL IN LOVE...
I'D LIKE TO LEAVE, GARRY. WOULD YOU TAKE ME HOME?
OF COURSE, VAL.
I SAW VAL OFTEN AFTER THAT. IN THE EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING, AFTER I'D FINISHED MY BROADCAST, I'D BE WITH HER... FOR A FEW STOLEN MOMENTS...AT HER APARTMENT...
DARLING, I LOVE YOU. I WISH I DIDN'T HAVE TO LEAVE.
OH, GARRY...SO DO I. I WISH YOU COULD STAY HERE...WITH ME... FOREVER.
OUR LOVE WAS A HUNGRY LOVE, FULL OF FIRE AND BURNING DESIRE...AND IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE...
WOULDN'T SHE GIVE YOU UP, LARRY? WOULDN'T SHE DIVORCE YOU?
RITA!? NEVER! SHE'S BEEN THROUGH A LOT WITH ME, VAL. SHE'S SEEN ME START AT THE BOTTOM AND CLIMB. SHE'D NEVER LET ME GO NOW...THAT I'M SUCCESSFUL!
AND I THINK OF THE ALIBIS I HAD TO MAKE TO RITA WHEN I'D FINALLY COME HOME AT FOUR OR FIVE A.M...
GARRY? THAT YOU? WHERE WERE YOU TILL NOW? IT'S FOUR-THIRTY! YOUR SHOW IS OVER AT TWO.
SORRY, RITA. I MET BEN AMES. WE HAD A FEW DRINKS. HE'S WORKING ON ANOTHER SPONSOR...FOR THE SHOW...
ALIBIS! ALIBIS! THAT'S ALL I HEAR! DON'T KID ME, GARRY! I KNOW YOU TOO WELL. I CAN SENSE WHEN YOU'RE LYING!
I SAW BEN AMES, RITA. IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME, I'M SORRY! I'M GOING TO BED. GOOD NIGHT!
2

RITA *KNEW* SOMETHING WAS GOING ON. IT WAS HARD TO FOOL HER. AND A DIVORCE WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION. I REALIZED I HAD TO DO SOMETHING... AND FAST...

HEY, GARRY. HOW'S ABOUT GIVING MY NEW DISC A PLUG ON YOUR SHOW WHEN IT'S RELEASED?

ALL RIGHT, EDDIE! SEND OVER A PRESSING!

I THINK IT WAS EDDIE'S RECORD THAT FIRST GAVE ME THE IDEA. I WAS JUST GETTING READY FOR A RUN-THROUGH OF THE NIGHT'S TUNES WHEN IT ARRIVED...

HMMM! *"MY ALIBI IS, I LOVE YOU".* WELL.. WE'LL GIVE IT A WHIRL..

I REMEMBER SITTING THERE LISTENING TO EDDIE'S NEW RELEASE AS SAUNDERS, MY AUDIO ENGINEER, CAME IN...

'LO, GARRY!

S'MATTER, NICK? YOU LOOK *SICK!*

I *AM*, GARRY. I OUGHT TO BE IN *BED*. I'M BURNING UP!

LOOK, KID, WHY DON'T YOU *TAKE OFF*? I'LL RUN THE TURN-TABLES *TONIGHT*.

A PLAN WAS FORMING IN MY MIND. I KEPT HEARING THOSE CORNY LYRICS... "MY ALIBI"... "MY ALIBI"...

GEE, GARRY! DO YOU THINK IT'LL BE *OKAY*?

SURE, NICK! RUN ALONG AND *TAKE CARE* OF YOURSELF! I'LL BE *FINE!*

IT WAS A *CRAZY* PLAN... A PLAN TO RID MYSELF OF RITA.. A PLAN TO BE FREE TO MARRY VALERIE. A PLAN OF *MURDER*... WITH AN *ALIBI*. I CUT OFF EDDIE'S RECORD, AND DARTED OUT OF THE STUDIO..

LET'S SEE. IT'S *THREE TWENTY-TWO*...

THE TIMING WOULD HAVE TO BE PERFECT. I DASHED DOWN THE BACK STAIRS OF THE BROADCASTING STATION, OUT INTO THE STREET, AND RAN THE FOUR SHORT BLOCKS TO MY APARTMENT. AT THE DOOR, I CHECKED MY WATCH AGAIN...

THREE TWENTY-SIX AND A *HALF*. *FIVE MINUTES* WOULD BE *PLENTY* OF TIME...

I DIDN'T GO INTO THE APARTMENT. INSTEAD, I DASHED BACK TO THE STUDIO. I CHECKED MY WATCH AGAIN...

A *FIVE* MINUTE SPIEL WILL *MORE THAN COVER IT.* LET'S SEE...

I PICKED UP EDDIE'S NEW RELEASE.

"PLAYING TIME: THREE MINUTES, THIRTY SECONDS." *GOOD ENOUGH!* I COULD *KILL RITA FIVE TIMES OVER* IN *THAT* TIME.

I LOCKED THE DOOR OF MY STUDIO, FLIPPED ON THE "DO NOT DISTURB, REHEARSAL" SIGN OUT IN THE HALL, AND WENT INTO THE CONTROL BOOTH. THERE WAS A RECORD-CUTTING MACHINE IN THERE...

ALL I DO IS CUT *TWO FIVE-MINUTE RECORDS*...PUT THEM ON THE TURN-TABLES...SET *ONE* TO PLAY *BEFORE* EDDIE'S TUNE... ONE *AFTER.* AND I HAVE *MY ALIBI.*

I TOOK A FIVE-MINUTE RECORD BLANK FROM THE CABINET AND SET IT ON THE CUTTING MACHINE. I FLIPPED THE SWITCH, SET THE NEEDLE, PICKED UP THE MIKE AND..

AND *NOW,* FOLKS, FOR OUR *FIRST* SELECTION HERE IN THE *"GREEN ROOM,"* I'VE CHOSEN A *NEW RELEASE* BY *YOUR* FAVORITE AND *MINE, EDDIE MILLER. EDDIE,* INCIDENTLY, HAS JUST SIGNED A *FAT CONTRACT* WITH *INTERNATIONAL CINE STUDIOS,* AND WILL BE FLYING TO *HOLLYWOOD* TO START A *FILM CAREER..*

I KEPT TALKING, TIMING THE RECORDING WITH MY STOP-WATCH. AT THE END OF FIVE MINUTES, I CONCLUDED..

...SO *BEST OF LUCK,* EDDIE. NOW... *GIVE OUT!*

NEXT, I TOOK A SECOND FIVE-MINUTE RECORD BLANK AND CUT THAT ONE..

BY THE WAY, FOLKS, IN CASE YOU'RE *WONDERING*... HEH, HEH...THE *TITLE* OF THAT RECORD WAS *"MY ALIBI IS, I LOVE YOU".* *CONGRATULATIONS* ON ANOTHER *HIT,* EDDIE. AND, *NOW,* FOLKS, *HERE'S* A TUNE BY THAT *FAMOUS TRUMPET-MAN*...

WHEN I'D FINISHED CUTTING THE SECOND RECORD, I REMOVED IT FROM THE MACHINE. I WAS READY...

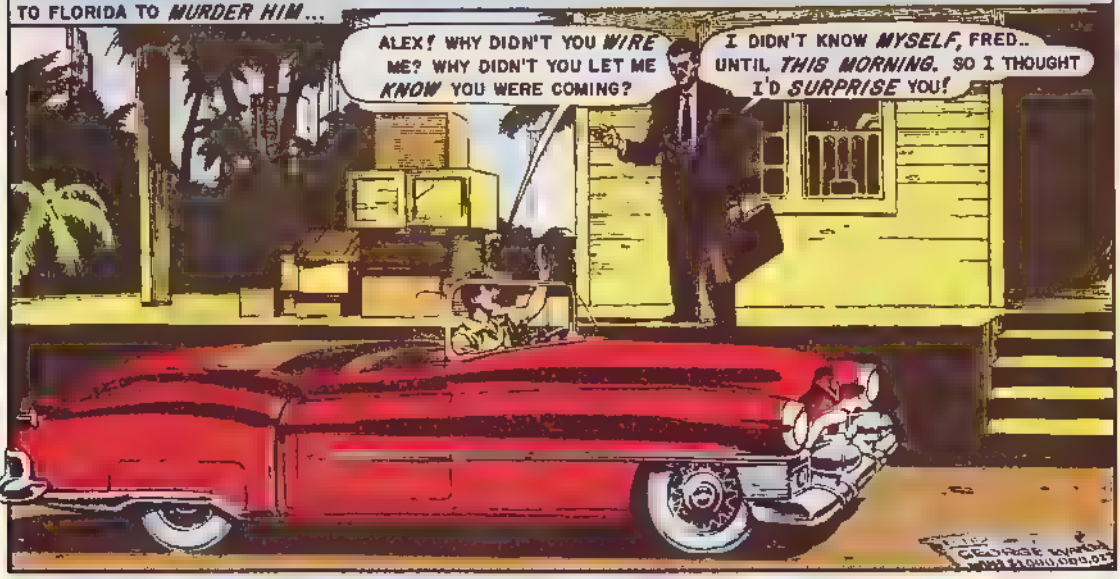
AFTER *ALL*... *HOW* COULD *I* HAVE *MURDERED RITA?!* I WAS *HERE* ALL THE *TIME*...LOCKED IN THE *STUDIO. MILLIONS OF LISTENERS HEARD ME.*

THERE WAS ONLY ONE MORE THING TO DO. AFTER I'D LOCKED THE CUTTINGS, TOGETHER WITH THE NIGHT'S TUNES, IN THE CABINET, I WENT HOME TO RITA. I HAD TO MAKE SURE SHE'D BE IN THE APARTMENT THAT NIGHT...
HONEY, LISTEN TO THE PROGRAM TONIGHT. I HAVE A SURPRISE FOR YOU.
I ALWAYS LISTEN, GARRY! YOU KNOW THAT!
I KISSED RITA WARMLY...
LISTEN TONIGHT, FOR SURE! AND I'LL BE HOME RIGHT AFTER THE PROGRAM... I SWEAR IT! NO MORE ALIBIS!
OH, GARRY... DARLING!
AS THE HANDS OF THE WALL CLOCK CRAWLED SLOWLY AROUND TO MIDNIGHT, I SAT IN MY LOCKED STUDIO, PERSPIRING NERVOUSLY. THE CUTTINGS AND EDDIE'S RECORD WERE WAITING ON THE TURN-TABLES. FINALLY, THE "ON THE AIR" SIGN FLASHED...
EVENIN', FOLKS! THIS IS YOUR MIDNIGHT MUSIC MAN, GARRY GREEN, WELCOMING YOU ALL TO THE FABULOUS "GREEN ROOM," THE HOME OF YOUR FAVORITE RECORDED STARS.
I FLICKED THE AUTOMATIC SWITCHES ON THE TURNTABLE. THE FIRST CUTTING BEGAN TO PLAY. THE REST WOULD FOLLOW, AUTOMATICALLY, IN SEQUENCE...
AND NOW, FOLKS, FOR OUR FIRST SELECTION HERE IN THE "GREEN ROOM," I'VE CHOSEN A NEW RELEASE BY YOUR FAVORITE AND MINE, EDDIE MILLER...
I WAS OUT THE STUDIO DOOR IN A FLASH... LOCKING IT BEHIND ME... POCKETING THE KEY. I RAN ALL THE WAY TO THE APARTMENT... FLUNG OPEN THE DOOR...
...SO BEST OF LUCK, EDDIE. NOW... GIVE OUT!
WHO... WHO... GARRY!
I TOLD YOU YOU'D BE SURPRISED, RITA!
EDDIE'S RECORD STARTED. I MOVED ACROSS THE LIVING ROOM TO THE RADIO, SPUN THE VOLUME KNOB. THE ORCHESTRAL INTRODUCTION BLASTED LOUDLY.
GARRY.. I...
I'M GOING TO KILL YOU, RITA!
RITA BACKED OFF. I PICKED UP A FIREPLACE POKER. EDDIE'S CORNY LYRICS STARTED AS I BROUGHT THE HEAVY BRASS KNOB OF THE POKER DOWN OVER RITA'S SCREAMING MOUTH...
GO AHEAD, RITA! SCREAM! NO ONE... WILL... OOOOFF... HEAR YOU...
GNNNNGG...
5

SO NOW RITA LIES UPON THE LUSH RUG WITH HER SKULL CRUSHED AND THE BLOOD OOZING FROM HER LACERATED FACE, WHILE BEHIND ME, THE LAST STRAINS OF EDDIE'S SONG FADES...
MY ALIBI IS... I LOVE YOU
I START TOWARD THE DOOR. THE SECOND CUTTING HAS STARTED NOW. I HEAR MY VOICE...
BY THE WAY, FOLKS, IN CASE YOU'RE WONDERING... HEH, HEH... THE TITLE OF THAT RECORD WAS "MY ALIBI..."
SUDDENLY, MY BLOOD FREEZES...
...THAT RECORD WAS "MY ALIBI..."
...AS I HEAR MY VOICE REPEAT... OVER AND OVER AGAIN.
...THAT RECORD WAS "MY ALIBI..."
...THAT RECORD WAS "MY ALIBI..."
...AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN.
...THAT RECORD WAS "MY ALIBI..."
...THAT RECORD WAS "MY ALIBI..."
...THAT RECORD WAS "MY ALIBI..."
...UNTIL SOMEONE AT THE STATION FINALLY UNLOCKS THE STUDIO DOOR AND COMES IN AND LIFTS THE TRAPPED NEEDLE...
HEY, GARRY! WHERE IN BLAZES ARE YOU? WHAT'S THIS? A GAG?
...AND HIS VOICE GOES OUT TO MY MILLIONS OF LISTENERS AND I KNOW THAT MY ALIBI IS BROKEN...
ER...UH... SORRY, FOLKS. SOMETHIN' MUST'VE GONE WRONG! WHILE GARRY'S GETTIN' BACK, WE'LL HEAR... LET'S SEE... A TUNE BY THAT FAMOUS TRUMPET-MAN...
CHOKE...
THE END

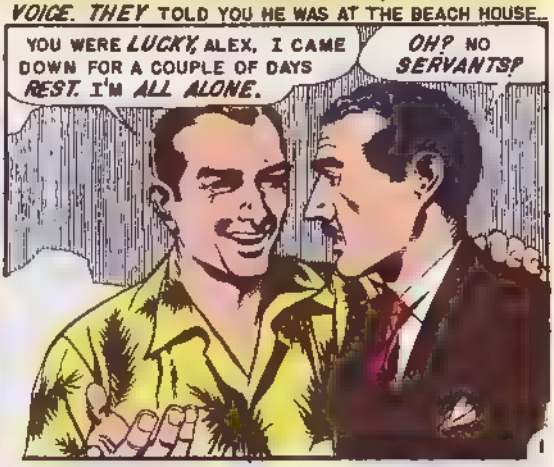
BLOOD BROTHERS

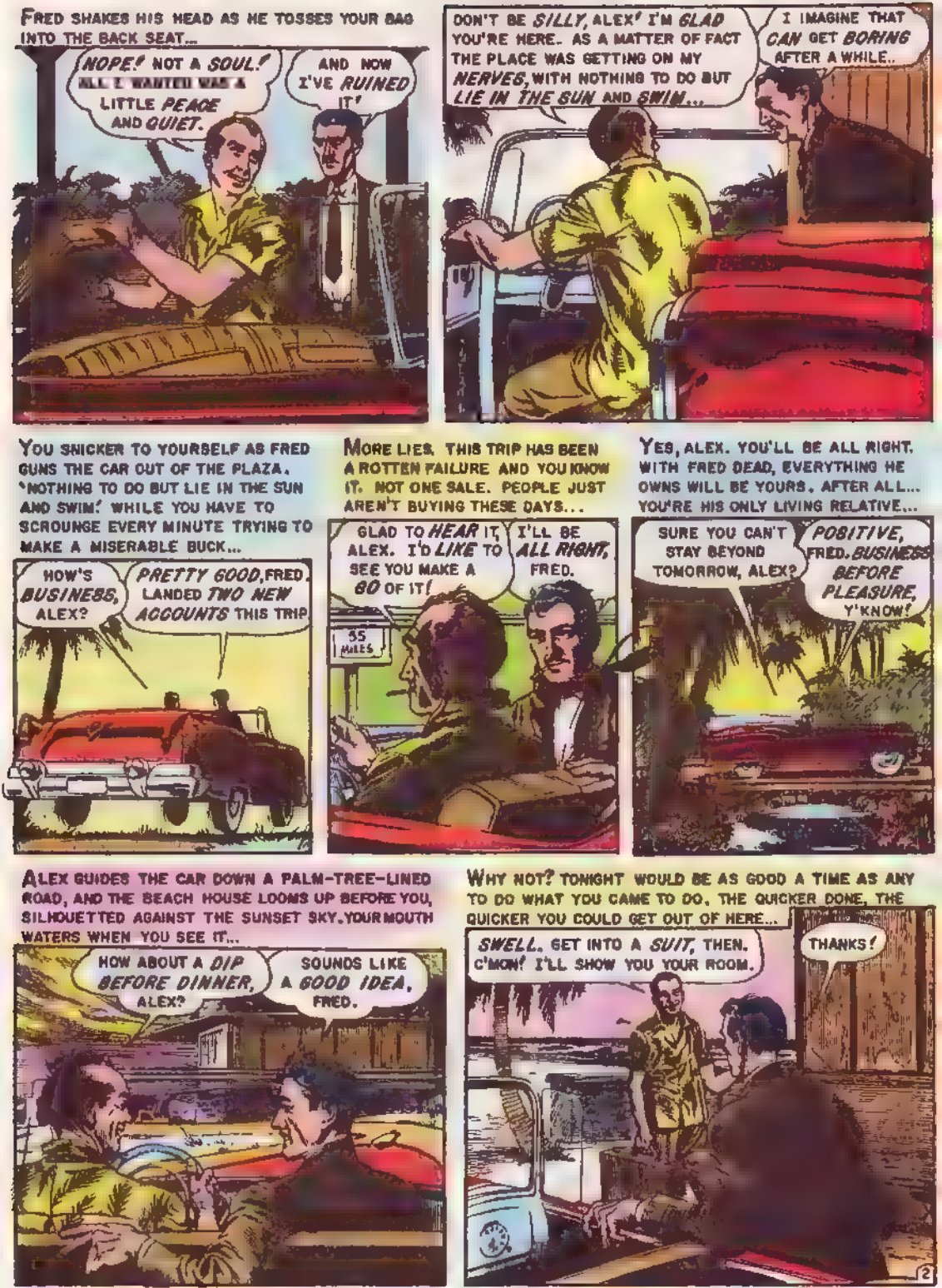
THE TRAIN IS GONE NOW, WHISTLING AWAY INTO THE LATE AFTERNOON, AND YOU STAND, ALONE, ON THE DESERTED RAILROAD STATION. A MOMENT AGO, YOU PHONED THE BEACH HOUSE AND YOUR BROTHER FREDERICK HAD ANSWERED. HE'D SEEMED PLEASANTLY SURPRISED AT YOUR UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL. YOU'D GIVEN HIM SOME LAME EXCUSE ABOUT 'JUST PASSING THROUGH'. YOU'D WONDERED IF YOU COULD SPEND THE NIGHT. HE'D TOLD YOU HE'D RUSH RIGHT DOWN AND PICK YOU UP. SO NOW YOU STAND, AND YOU WAIT, AND YOU WATCH, AS FREDERICK'S SHINY NEW CADILLAC CONVERTIBLE SWINGS INTO THE STATION PLAZA, AND HE WAVES TO YOU AND YOU WAVE BACK AND SMILE AND TRY NOT TO SHOW YOUR HATRED FOR HIM, YOUR JEALOUSY OF HIS WEALTH, AND THE FACT THAT YOU'VE *COME* TO FLORIDA TO *MURDER HIM*...

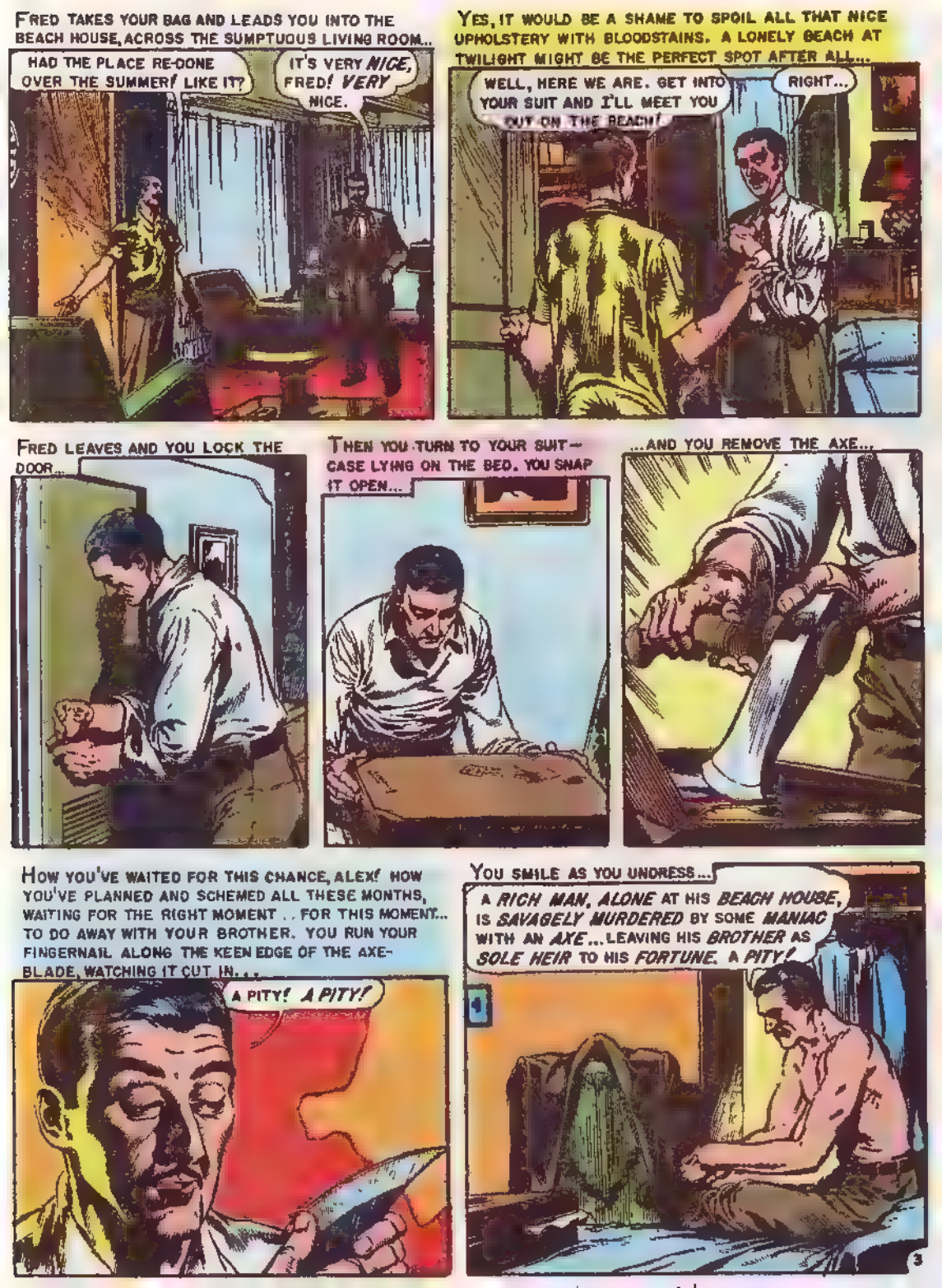

ALEX! WHY DIDN'T YOU *WIRE* ME? WHY DIDN'T YOU LET ME *KNOW* YOU WERE COMING?
I DIDN'T KNOW *MYSELF*, FRED.. UNTIL *THIS MORNING*. SO I THOUGHT I'D *SURPRISE* YOU!

YOU WATCH AS FREDERICK SWINGS FROM THE CAR AND RUSHES TOWARD YOU IN HIS FIFTY DOLLAR SLACKS AND HIS THIRTY DOLLAR SPORT SHIRT...

JUST TOOK A *CHANCE!* HOW YOU CAN *LIE*, ALEX. YOU PHONED FRED'S *OFFICE* THIS MORNING, DISGUISED YOUR *VOICE*. *THEY* TOLD YOU HE WAS AT THE BEACH HOUSE.




FRED SHAKES HIS HEAD AS HE TOSSES YOUR BAG INTO THE BACK SEAT...
NOPE! NOT A SOUL! ALL I WANTED WAS A LITTLE PEACE AND QUIET.
AND NOW I'VE RUINED IT!
DON'T BE SILLY, ALEX! I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE. AS A MATTER OF FACT THE PLACE WAS GETTING ON MY NERVES, WITH NOTHING TO DO BUT LIE IN THE SUN AND SWIM...
I IMAGINE THAT CAN GET BORING AFTER A WHILE..
YOU SNICKER TO YOURSELF AS FRED GUNS THE CAR OUT OF THE PLAZA. 'NOTHING TO DO BUT LIE IN THE SUN AND SWIM! WHILE YOU HAVE TO SCROUNGE EVERY MINUTE TRYING TO MAKE A MISERABLE BUCK...
HOW'S BUSINESS, ALEX?
PRETTY GOOD, FRED. LANDED TWO NEW ACCOUNTS THIS TRIP
MORE LIES. THIS TRIP HAS BEEN A ROTTEN FAILURE AND YOU KNOW IT. NOT ONE SALE. PEOPLE JUST AREN'T BUYING THESE DAYS...
GLAD TO HEAR IT, ALEX. I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU MAKE A GO OF IT!
I'LL BE ALL RIGHT, FRED.
55 MILES
YES, ALEX. YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT. WITH FRED DEAD, EVERYTHING HE OWNS WILL BE YOURS. AFTER ALL... YOU'RE HIS ONLY LIVING RELATIVE...
SURE YOU CAN'T STAY BEYOND TOMORROW, ALEX?
POSITIVE, FRED. BUSINESS BEFORE PLEASURE, Y'KNOW!
ALEX GUIDES THE CAR DOWN A PALM-TREE-LINED ROAD, AND THE BEACH HOUSE LOOMS UP BEFORE YOU, SILHOUETTED AGAINST THE SUNSET SKY. YOUR MOUTH WATERS WHEN YOU SEE IT...
HOW ABOUT A DIP BEFORE DINNER, ALEX?
SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD IDEA, FRED.
WHY NOT? TONIGHT WOULD BE AS GOOD A TIME AS ANY TO DO WHAT YOU CAME TO DO. THE QUICKER DONE, THE QUICKER YOU COULD GET OUT OF HERE...
SWELL. GET INTO A SUIT, THEN. C'MON! I'LL SHOW YOU YOUR ROOM.
THANKS!
2


FRED TAKES YOUR BAG AND LEADS YOU INTO THE BEACH HOUSE, ACROSS THE SUMPTUOUS LIVING ROOM...
HAD THE PLACE RE-DONE OVER THE SUMMER! LIKE IT?
IT'S VERY NICE, FRED! VERY NICE.
YES, IT WOULD BE A SHAME TO SPOIL ALL THAT NICE UPHOLSTERY WITH BLOODSTAINS. A LONELY BEACH AT TWILIGHT MIGHT BE THE PERFECT SPOT AFTER ALL...
WELL, HERE WE ARE. GET INTO YOUR SUIT AND I'LL MEET YOU OUT ON THE BEACH!
RIGHT...
FRED LEAVES AND YOU LOCK THE DOOR...
THEN YOU TURN TO YOUR SUIT-CASE LYING ON THE BED. YOU SNAP IT OPEN...
...AND YOU REMOVE THE AXE...
HOW YOU'VE WAITED FOR THIS CHANCE, ALEX! HOW YOU'VE PLANNED AND SCHEMED ALL THESE MONTHS, WAITING FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT . . FOR THIS MOMENT... TO DO AWAY WITH YOUR BROTHER. YOU RUN YOUR FINGERNAIL ALONG THE KEEN EDGE OF THE AXE-BLADE, WATCHING IT CUT IN. . .
A PITY! A PITY!
YOU SMILE AS YOU UNDRESS...
A RICH MAN, ALONE AT HIS BEACH HOUSE, IS SAVAGELY MURDERED BY SOME MANIAC WITH AN AXE...LEAVING HIS BROTHER AS SOLE HEIR TO HIS FORTUNE. A PITY!
3

YOU PULL YOUR TRUNKS FROM YOUR BAG. YOU LOOK AT THEM. YOU SHAKE YOUR HEAD...
NO! I MUSTN'T TAKE ANY CHANCES!
YOU UNLOCK YOUR DOOR AND MOVE DOWN THE HALL...
FRED?!
YES, ALEX!
FRED, I DON'T SEEM TO HAVE ANY SWIM TRUNKS WITH ME. COULD YOU LEND ME A PAIR?
OF COURSE, 'OL BOY! HERE Y'ARE!
THAT'S RIGHT. A THING LIKE BLOOD ON A PAIR OF SWIM TRUNKS COULD BE INCRIMINATING. WHY TAKE CHANCES? IF THE POLICE WERE TO FIND IT ON FRED'S OWN PAIR, THERE WOULD BE NO REASON TO POINT AN ACCUSING FINGER AT YOU...
THANKS, FRED.
SURE THING, ALEX. HURRY IT UP, HUH? IT'S GETTING DARK. I'LL GO ON AHEAD.
YOU'VE PLANNED IT ALL SO CAREFULLY, HAVEN'T YOU, ALEX? HOW COULD THEY SUSPECT YOU? AFTER ALL, YOU WERE ON THE ROAD WHEN IT HAPPENED... MILES FROM HERE. YOU GO BACK INTO YOUR ROOM AND FINISH UNDRESSING...
YOU REMEMBER HOW YOU'D PHONED FRED'S OFFICE THIS MORNING ON A HUNCH...
SORRY, SIR. MR. RICHARDS IS OUT OF TOWN, AT HIS BEACH HOUSE. WHO'S CALLING...
NEVER MIND! I'LL TRY AGAIN ANOTHER TIME.
YOU REMEMBER HOW YOU'D CHECKED THE RAILROAD TIME TABLES...
THERE'S A TRAIN LEAVING THIS BERG AT TWO THIS AFTERNOON. ARRIVES WHERE FRED IS AT 6 P.M. THAT'S GOOD. NOW, LET'S SEE...
THERE'S ONE LEAVING FRED'S TOWN AT FOUR A.M. BRINGS ME BACK HERE AT EIGHT A.M. PERFECT!

So you'd *CHECKED IN AT A HOTEL* at *ONE* this afternoon...

I've *BEEN ON THE ROAD ALL NIGHT* and *ALL MORNING. I DON'T WANT TO BE DISTURBED!* I'd like to leave a call for *NINE, TOMORROW MORNING.*

CERTAINLY, SIR.

You'd *SET YOUR ALIBI.* If you were *SLEEPING* in a *HOTEL ROOM* three hundred miles from Fred's *MURDER,* how could they pin it on *YOU?* At *ONE FORTY-FIVE,* you'd slipped out the rear entrance of your hotel....

...And you'd caught the *TWO P.M.* train to Fred's town...

Some time tonight, I *KILL* him... and catch that *FOUR A.M.* train *BACK.* That brings me in with *PLENTY* of time to get my *MORNING CALL.*

You stare out of the window at the beach. Fred is there, sitting in the sand, a grey shadow in the gathering dusk...

You pick up the axe and tiptoe, barefooted, from your room, down the hall, and out of the beach house...

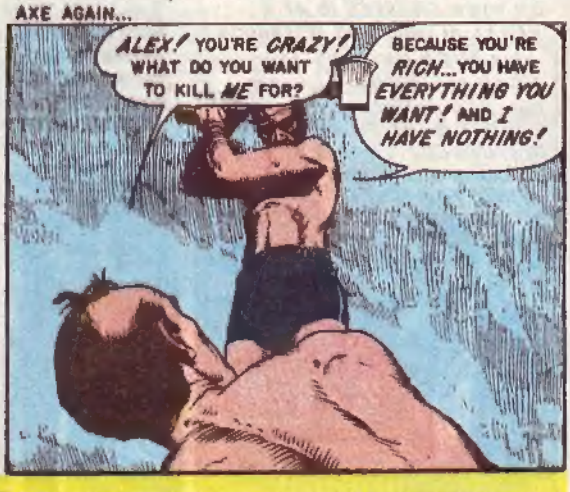
Fred sits, smoking a cigarette, gazing out at the sea. The roar of the incoming surf drowns out your footsteps as you sneak up behind him...

You raise the axe. Your heart beats wildly in your chest. The perspiration pours from your face. Your hands, gripping the axehandle, are wet and sticky. You feel suddenly afraid. You grit your teeth and...

ALEX? That *YOU...?* *OH MY GOD!*

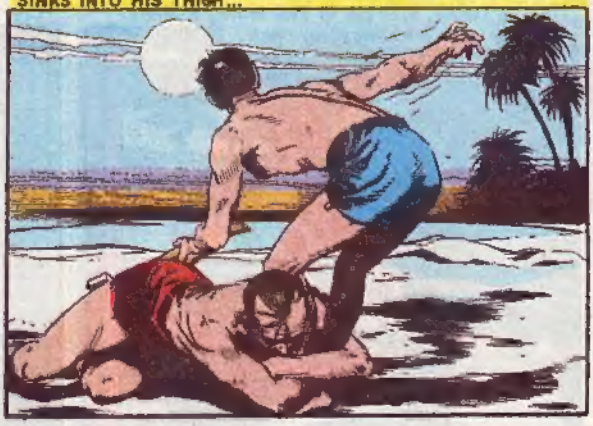
FRED TURNS AS YOU BRING THE AXE DOWN, AND YOU MISS HIS HEAD. THE BLADE SINKS INTO THE SOFT FLESH BETWEEN HIS NECK AND SHOULDER. HE SPRAWLS FORWARD...

HE ROLLS OVER, STARING UP AT YOU, AS YOU RAISE THE AXE AGAIN...



YOU BRING THE AXE DOWN AGAIN. HE RAISES HIS HANDS TO WARD OFF THE BLOW. THE BLADE SINKS DEEP INTO HIS RIGHT FOREARM...

THE WHITE SAND BLUSHES CRIMSON AROUND FRED AS HE WRITHES AT YOUR FEET. YOU LIFT THE AXE ONCE MORE. HE GRABS AT YOUR ANKLES...PULLING YOU DOWN. THE AXE SINKS INTO HIS THIGH...

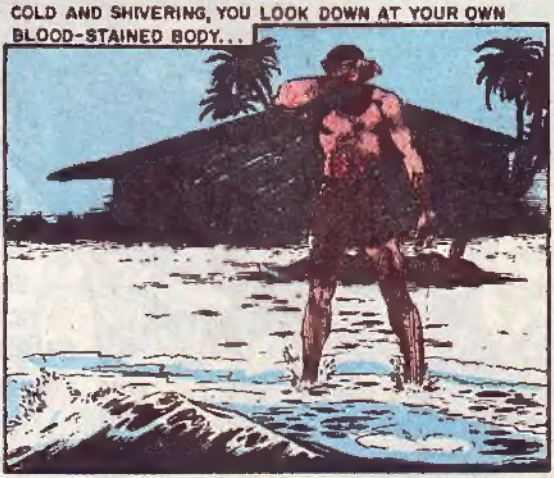


HE STRUGGLES WITH YOU, ROLLING OVER AND OVER, THE BLOOD FROM HIS DEEP WOUNDS COVERING YOU WITH A SICKLY RED SMEAR...

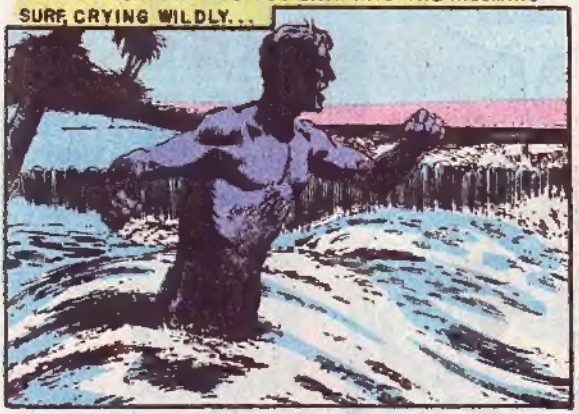
FRED'S STRENGTH FADES AS HE TRIES TO STOP YOU FROM STRIKING AGAIN. YOU WRENCH FREE, LIFTING THE AXE A FINAL TIME...

YOU GET TO YOUR FEET. YOU LOOK DOWN AT THE BLOODY MESS LYING STILL AND LIFELESS ON THE SCARLET SAND. AND THEN YOU FEEL SICK. YOUR STOMACH GROWLS AND HEAVES AND YOU CLAP YOUR HAND TO YOUR MOUTH...

AND AFTER YOU'VE SPILLED UP YOUR GUTS AND YOU'RE COLD AND SHIVERING, YOU LOOK DOWN AT YOUR OWN BLOOD-STAINED BODY...

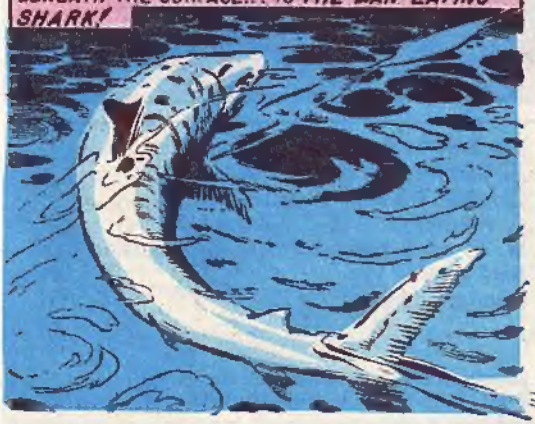


AND YOU SUDDENLY WANT TO CLEANSE YOURSELF... CLEANSE YOURSELF OF THE VILE DEED YOU HAVE DONE... WASH THE BLOOD OF YOUR SIN FROM YOU... ERASE THE CRIMSON HORROR. SO YOU DASH INTO THE INCOMING SURF, CRYING WILDLY...



AND, AS YOU SPLASH ABOUT BEYOND THE BREAKERS, WHERE THE SWELLS ARE GENTLE AND SOOTHING, THE FRESH BLOOD FADES AWAY, POOLS OUTWARD IN THE TIDE, DARKENING THE DARK WATER, DRIFTING AWAY... DRIFTING...

...DRIFTING TO THE KNIFE-LIKE FIN THAT CUTS THROUGH THE EVENING SEA, BRINGING THE SCENT OF THE WARM BLOOD TO THE SLEEK SILVERY FORM BENEATH THE SURFACE... TO *THE MAN-EATING SHARK!*



INFLAMED BY THE SCENT OF FRESH WARM BLOOD, THE MAN-EATER STREAKS FORWARD, TURNING OVER, ITS RAZOR-SHARP TEETH BARED, STRIKING OUT AT THE WHITE FORM FLOATING BEFORE IT, SLASHING AT THE SOFT FLESH THAT IS YOUR BODY, ALEX RICHARDS...

AND AS THE BLOOD-MADDENED CREATURE RIPS AND TEARS, YOU REALIZE, THROUGH THE PAIN, THAT IT IS... THE END...

The Old Witch